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State Representative
Bob Hasegawa (D-Seattle)

Working for the 11th Legislative District
And a Better Washington

Report on the 2006 Legislative Session

Website: <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/hasegawa>



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

Greetings! I hope this spring finds you healthy and happy. The 2006 Legislative session ended on March 8, after a very busy 59 days. Combined with the 2005 legislative session, we've had the most productive Legislature in our State's history.

I am pleased with many of the progressive ideas that passed, but there is still much work to be done to make sure all of our students succeed in school. We must take a hard look at our tax system to improve it and make it more fair for working families and small businesses. And we must move in the right direction to deliver affordable and accessible health care.

I believe working families and small businesses are the real backbone of South Central King County communities and our state. Folks from Renton, Tukwila, Burien, SeaTac, to Seattle, to unincorporated King County face real challenges and deserve a fair deal. From access to health care to great schools to job opportunities, I think one of the state's key roles—and my role as your representative—should be to level the playing field, and give everybody a shot at success.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report on the 2006 session. I look forward to your calls, e-mails and visits to discuss issues that affect real working people. Together we can make our state even greater.

Sincerely,

State Representative Bob Hasegawa

My Priorities:

Working families, strong communities, sustainable economic development

In 2006, my priorities included sponsoring bills for working families and small businesses:

Willing to take on the big issues

Holding Big Oil companies responsible to our citizens

Last year, Exxon posted the largest profit any company has earned in the history of the world: \$36 billion!! "If Exxon were a country and revenue were its gross domestic product, its \$404 billion in annualized GDP would make it the 18th-most-productive country in the world, with a bigger economy than Switzerland or Saudi Arabia. Its quarterly revenue was more than the latest quarterly revenue of fellow Dow components Alcoa, American Express, Boeing, Caterpillar, DuPont, Walt Disney, Home Depot, Honeywell, Coca-Cola and McDonald's combined." — Dow Jones & Company, Inc.

As prices rise at the pump, ordinary folks continue to pump up oil companies' profits. I proposed a fee on the massive windfall profits of oil companies, to help keep the cost of oil down and to bring some of that money back into our communities. Energy is essential to our growing economy — the oil corporations' exploitative profits hurt the public and stifle our economy. The House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee held a hearing on the bill (House Bill 2977).



Getting the most from our public property

It hurts our communities when government sells public property for rock-bottom prices, and then allows private individuals to sell the land for giant profits. Sweetheart deals violate peoples' trust in government, like the recent case where a private company cleared a cool \$9.6 million for land they bought from the Port of Seattle (without a competitive bid) and resold a year later. I introduced reforms to make government agencies meet higher standards when selling land to private companies. Public lands are our legacy to our children and need to be protected.

Ensuring voting rights for people with limited English

All citizens should cast an informed and meaningful vote, even if English is not their first language. The federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 protects every American against racial discrimination in voting, including the voting rights of many people who have limited English skills. I wrote a bill that would protect those voting rights in state law.

Creating a progressive, prosperous state

I also co-sponsored a number of bills, many of them now signed into law, to improve the lives and opportunities of working families. These included:

- Equal protection of the civil rights of our gay and lesbian citizens
- Expanded access to college, university, vocational/technical training and apprenticeships
- Energy freedom through Washington-produced biodiesel and ethanol
- Campaign finance reform
- Affordable housing
- Fighting insurance and other fraud
- Better foster care, health care, and workers' protections

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**Working for
Family-wage jobs**

I know how hard families and individuals work, so they can enjoy life, time with their families and our fine communities in South King County. That’s why I supported a number of reforms that will truly help working families keep or find good jobs. I voted to:

- Create a “Running Start for the Trades,” which expands apprenticeships to high school students moving into the building trade.
- Give a fair deal to child care workers and home care workers.
- Extend apprenticeships to public works contracts awarded by the Department of Transportation and team up with programs such as “Helmets to Hardhats” in order to transition soldiers from military service to the construction workforce.
- Start a workforce training program, where local businesses can contract with community and technical colleges and receive grants to keep their employees well-trained.
- Reform Unemployment Insurance, negotiated and agreed to by both business and labor.

Fairness for Small Business

Small to medium-size businesses employ most of Washington’s workers, yet they often don’t get the benefits of mega-corporations. I supported several measures this year to ease the burden on small businesses. There’s definitely room for improvement, especially in reforming the harmful B&O tax that hits small businesses before they even make a profit.

In 2006, we passed:

- A new voluntary Small Business Health Partnership, with employee, employer and the state sharing costs for low-income employees. The size of the subsidy would depend on the employee’s income.
- An increase in the personal property tax exemption for owner-operated small businesses, from \$3,000 to \$15,000 for work items such as computers and office equipment.
- Relief from an early tax deadline and penalty for late filing for small businesses.

Improving our local communities

Our south-central King County communities as well as Seattle will benefit from local projects to improve our quality of life. I was proud to support:

- Revitalizing Renton with a re-furbished Civic Center
- Fixing and constructing highways, roads and bridges on I-405, I-5, State Route 167, State Route 99 and the Alaskan Way Viaduct
- Replacing sewer main lines in our local Val-View Sewer District, through a \$3.55 million low-interest loan from the Public Works Trust Fund

A fiscally sane budget

The 2006 budget saved two dollars for every new dollar invested. Unlike the crazy spending and misguided priorities on the federal level, here in Washington State we set aside over \$940 million for future education, pension and health care costs. The rest was invested in everything from long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities to renewable energy projects—**smart ways to improve our state.**

Report on the 2006 Legislative Session

**Working for
Great Students,
Schools & Teachers**

State government’s top priority is supporting education—it’s even written into the state Constitution. I also see great schools and teachers as a priority. Unfortunately, it’s hard to see how the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) graduation standard will move us forward. The WASL is an “all or nothing” test every student must pass to graduate, beginning with this year’s sophomore class. It appears the WASL will punitively screen out low income and children of color. Statistics by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) shockingly project an extremely disproportionately high failure rate by low income and children of color. This means the 11th District—probably the most diverse in the state with 111 different languages spoken—will likely be one of the hardest hit by the new WASL graduation standard. During session, I worked with other legislators, especially those “across the aisle” who represent rural lower income districts, but we were unable to temporarily prevent the WASL as a graduation requirement.



That being said, we need to take a long, hard look at how we ensure **ALL** of our children and students get a first-class education and are given needed support to pass the WASL. In 2006, we made a few steps toward helping students succeed:

- We authorized alternatives to the standard test (WASL), so students can demonstrate their abilities when they struggle in testing situations and fail sections of the test. Visit www.wasl2006.org to learn more about these alternatives.
- We funded tutoring support for students who don’t pass sections of the WASL, through after school and summer school programs.
- We made students, schools and teachers a priority in the budget. In the last two years, we increased state funding for Washington’s public schools by \$1.45 billion – about \$1,490 per student, including teacher and classified school employee cost of living raises, classroom size reduction, and school construction.

There’s still a lot of work to make sure dropout rates don’t increase and all students regardless of income or race receive a fine education. Their futures—and our state’s future—depend on fair, smart and progressive education reform.

Colleges, universities and technical schools also help our children’s success. I sponsored a bill to expand four-year degree partnerships at community colleges and also voted to fund about 500 new openings in high-demand fields, such as nursing and engineering, and another 400 “Opportunity Grants” for low-income folks who want to enter high-demand fields.



**Working for
Quality, Affordable
Health Care**

Health care costs keep going up, and I believe we need to make some serious reforms so folks who work hard don’t end up without health coverage. To increase health care quality and accessibility, I voted to:

- Cover more kids who lack health care coverage. We have a commitment to cover all kids by 2010, and this year we added 7,000 more children. We also barred state agencies from charging premiums to low-income kids on Medicaid. In the last two years, we made sure 80,000 more kids have health care coverage.
- Offer health care to 6,500 more low-income people through an investment in the Basic Health Plan.
- Restore money for community clinics, one of the most cost-effective ways to treat low-income and working families.
- Help seniors and others get access to prescription drugs. The controversial federal Medicare prescription drug benefit transferred roughly 100,000 of our state’s most vulnerable residents from Medicaid to Medicare—and required co-pays for needed medicines. We provided \$18 million so they won’t be subjected to these co-pays.
- Improve patient safety.



**Goodbye to Day-use
Park Fees**

State parks belong to all of us, and the \$5 day-use fee was a tough burden for seniors, low-income families and others who wanted to enjoy the parks. I co-sponsored a successful bill to eliminate the day-use fee, and open the park gates for everyone to enjoy. Have a great spring and summer in our wonderful state parks!